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ABSTRACT

Two different operational concepts of "vision" are compared and analyzed in terms of their applicability to educational organization. The military model is vertical, hierarchical, conducive to immediate and specific action, and unambiguous responsibility. However, its inflexibility discourages communication and creativity. The Native American, specifically, the Sioux Indian, type of organizational framework is circular, collegial, and based on assignment of responsibility according to individual expertise. However, its acceptance of multiple leadership and shared decision making does not facilitate quick action. Applied to the organizational structure of schools, a merger of the structural military model with the individually empowering circular system is advocated. The objective is not teacher-managed schools, but the assignment of responsibility to appropriate people and the recognition of multiple visions. The combined model provides structure for management of routine tasks, yet encourages shared information and leadership. (LMI)

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# COLLEGIALITY: CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING SHARED VISION, UTILIZING A TEAM APPROACH

Dr. Jane Pulling

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators, San Francisco, CA, February 23-26, 1990.

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**Collegiality:**
**Creating and Implementing Shared Vision**
**Utilizing a Team Approach**

Vision is an expression very much in vogue these days in the world of education. We as educators think that we have borrowed this expression from the business world. The fast track educational administrator today reads business Business Week, Thriving on Chaos, and Megatrends 2000 and seems to be perpetually in the process of adopting or adapting the most recent business models and theories to the realm of education.

We borrow the words of business, "accountability", "client", "decentralized management", and "mission statement". In actuality, the notion of vision is an ancient one and it might be better for us to consult the pages of a history book to help further our understanding of the concept instead of literature from the business world. The early Greeks consulted the oracle at Delphi, who saw and interpreted their visions. The Christian Church of the Middle Ages was replete with saints whose visions, like Joan of Arc, were sometimes powerful enough to change the course of medieval history.

The historical precedent of the importance of vision is a strong one. I would like to focus today on two radically different operational concepts of vision, both arising from history and both present today in the business world, and discuss their application to the world of education.

The two concepts of vision come from two radically disparate voices. The first is a military model of vision arising out of long annuls of military history and the art of warfare. The second is a model of vision which comes from our own country, the history of native Americans.

Let's look first at the military model: As the daughter of a naval officer, my entire upbringing was steeped in military history, tradition and the concepts of naval warfare. But while I may have had a particularly intense military infusion, the traditions of the service have been directly experienced by many Americans from all socio-economic levels, particularly men, many of whom have had direct experience with a military organization in their young adult lives. The military model for organization, the military notion of vision, is one that is wide spread and widely accepted in our culture. What is that model?

The military model is one of verticality, in which a commanding officer defines the task at hand and everyone else implements that definition. It is a linear model, it is a left-brained model. In a military model we invest all of our thinking ability in a few minds. The Civil War was an excellent example of this--Lee, Grant, Stonewall, Jackson, and Sherman. I think we have done the same thing with the principalship and the superintendency. The concept of vision under such a management style or organizational pattern is a very simple one. You don't create the vision,

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the vision is created for you. There is only one vision -- to defeat the enemy and win the war. This is an excellent model and an excellent interpretation of vision under certain sets of circumstances. It is a good model in a crisis; it is a good model in some high stress situations where instant action is required. It may be a good model in some start up situations where specific tasks need to be accomplished in a very quick period.

What is this notion of vision and the model that emanates from it "not good" for? It is not good for getting significant input from a broad base; it is not good for fostering extensive creativity and innovation. It is not good for generating bottom up communication. There is a stability inherent in the military notion of vision and the military model of organization which comes from clear understanding of where one's responsibilities and authority begin and end. That environment can be a highly successful one for individuals with a low tolerance for ambiguity.

Many of us may be most comfortable with this basic organizational framework. Most of our school systems are organized under a pseudo-militaristic model. As proof of this notion examine virtually any organizational chart from any school system in the United States. You will find a more or less equilateral, triangular, top-down administrative model which could be transposed on a unit of any of our military services with little difficulty except perhaps some adjustment in the ludicrously large span of control we seem to favor in education. Further support comes from the National Center for Educational Information which does an annual profile on school administrators in the United States. The most recent profile of administrator shows that our superintendents are primarily male(96%). Our principals are 70% male. Both are over the age of 45. I don't have figures on how many of these individuals have had military experience at some point in their careers, but given an average age of over 45, one can subtract 20 years and put most in the middle of the Vietnam Conflict in an era of enforced conscription.

Is this bad? That is not what I mean to suggest. There is much beneficial about a military model of organization. It has many positive points and it has utility in a number of situations. The most significant problem inherent in such a model, however is its lack of flexibility and the singularity of its vision. If it is the only model we have at our disposal; the only model we are able to implement in our school systems we will have closed the doors to many potentially promising solutions to critical problems that face us.

The second model of vision I would like to discuss has its origin in the historical concept of religious vision and in the culture of native Americans. I want to talk about the Sioux Indians. I choose to talk the Sioux because my husband is a collector of Sioux Indian artifacts and I have, in support of his efforts, read, visited, and traveled,

learning about this tribe. I have had the personal privilege of being present in sweat lodge ceremonies and observing a sun dance, so I am most familiar with this concept of vision in the context in the traditional religion of the Sioux, but of course, the concept is present in other native American traditions as well--Navajo, Cherokee, Crow, Blackfeet, and more.

The organizational pattern of traditional Sioux culture contrasts sharply with the military model. The military are organized in platoons, companies, and armies. The ratios leaders to workers are suitable for a triangular, top-down supervisory model. The Sioux, on the other hand, base their culture and their organization on circular or cyclical patterns. Look at a parade ground on any military base and you will find rectangle. Look at companies lined up in formation and you will find squares. Look at a teepee and you see a circle, and so it is also with the pattern of traditional Sioux life.

The Sioux were organized into what they called the Taoushpa or the kinship, which was a small group of people whose purpose for being together was their mutual survival. Kinship implied more than simply an organizational pattern because these small groups were, in fact, very intimately related to each other. Beyond the kinship, the Sioux would also organize into bands where several family groups would come together for the purpose of achieving a common goal such as a spring hunt, which required large numbers of workers to insure success for the group as a whole.

Did the **Taoushpa** have leadership? Of course it did! But the leadership was of a different nature than our traditional military model. Leaders emerged for a variety of purposes. Although most often each bond had one over-all leader. It was generally accepted that one could be a leader in specific areas and not in others. So the best hunter might be responsible for organizing and leading the hunt to bring in the buffalo. The person with the deepest spirituality might be the individual chosen to lead religious ceremonies and yet another individual might lead a war party.

Decisions of importance to the group were made in a circle, in the teepee, around the camp fire, with the passing of the peace pipe which symbolically said, "In this group we are all equal; opinions may be voiced by anyone".

What is this model good for? It's **good** for generating a high level of commitment. The people had a direct investment in the outcome under this system and because they had an investment in the outcome, they had a significant commitment to its implementation and its success. This system offers **positive possibilities** for **problem solving** and easing the burden of leadership. Acceptance of **multiple visions** and leadership in selected areas allows for creative solutions to problems and flexibility of organizational response to needs. What is the circular model **not good** for? It is **not good** for generating action quickly. If everyone

is entitled to a point of view, decisions take longer to reach. Freedom to participate as equals, also means the freedom to choose not to participate, which in the history of the Sioux had some disastrous consequences.

The concept of vision in traditional Sioux religion is an important one. In the traditional religion adults of all ages, but especially young men and women, seek a vision by going on a quest-- an hamblecheya--in which they leave the group and go to a remote place, fast, and pray for a period of time. During this time, they see a vision. It may be an eagle flying in the sky; a spider crawling across the ground, or a formation of clouds in the sky. At the conclusion of this period of fasting and prayer, they share their vision with the medicine man who helps them interpret the meaning. The literal translation of hamblecheya means "crying for a vision". While it was the tradition among the Sioux for young people to seek a vision looking for direction at the beginning of their adult lives, it was also very much the case that in times of crisis or indecision one might go on a vision quest to be redirected and to find a new road.

In the traditional religion, the road and the four directions play a very significant role. The north symbolizes birth, renewal, and beginning of all things. The east is wisdom. The west is power and action. The south is justice, truth, and responsibility. In leading a good life, the Sioux refer to searching for the "red road", the road that leads to truth. In seeking a vision, the individual asks for power, not power for personal egotism. Black Elk, a famous Sioux medicine man, speaks of his own vision and the use of power and says that the power must come through you, that it is not yours and that responsible use of power flows from the Great Spirit through you to the people. If you attempt to use power for your own good, he says, you will ultimately fail, causing destruction and damage to the people. Power rightly used results in the betterment of the entire Taoushpa.

Is this beginning to sound similar to words, phrases, and concepts we are seeing in the business and education literature today? Richard Marinary, an editor of Success Magazine says "Autocratic delegation is ineffective in todays market". Ralph Staer, CEO of Johnsonville Foods, hired a consultant to tell him what was wrong with his business. The consultant told him, "The problem is you. You know everything; you make the decision. No wonder people won't take responsibility, you won't let them." In A Nation Prepared, the 1986 Carnegie Task Force report's number one recommendation was to change the traditional hierarchical structure of schools.

We have all heard the old expression "You can't have it both ways". My natural inclination and my personal leadership style tends much more toward the Taoushpa, the kinship, collegiality, and mutual decision making, conceptually anyway. I also believe there is within me, if

I am being honest, elements of that military background and more autocratic management style that influenced my childhood. But I agree with Tom Peters, who writes in Thriving On Chaos, that delegation is essential in coping with the volume of change in today's world and that it is absolutely urgent that we free up organizations to work faster by getting rid of traditional hierarchical supervisory models. The conclusion I have reached about these two apparently diametrically opposed notions of vision in management is that we can and must have both.

Barbara Coloroso in her philosophy of discipline talks about the jelly fish and the brick wall. She concludes that spineless discipline doesn't help students nor does excessive rigidity. I think the same analogy can be made in looking at vision and its implementation through management models. **What we can and must have is a merger of the structural backbone that a military model brings us with the involvement, excitement empowerment, and creativity that comes from a circular, collegial system.** We need to pull the strenghts of both and avoid the weaknesses and pitfalls of each viewpoint.

One has only to look at George Steinbreiner's management of the New York Yankees to see the toll of an autocratic top down view of vision and management. The errors of collegial management are perhaps, not as immediately visible because we really haven't implemented this notion in a wide-spread way, but we can look back to the group therapy sessions of the early sixties and see the ineffectiveness of shared ignorance.

What will a merger of these two theories look like? I am not sure, because I think that we will be charting completely new ground. But perhaps we can paint some broad brush strokes of this new leadership.

Napolean said, "There is a gift in being able to see at a glance the possibilities offered by the terrain." Implementing a merged theory, the job of the chief executive officer, the administrator, the superintendent, and the principal will be to see the possibilities and eliminate their jobs. Do I mean turn the management of schools over to teachers? No, I do not! ...Make the right people responsible for the right things at the right time.

Ralph Staer, the executive I mentioned earlier from Johnsonville Food has a plaque on his desk that says, "The question is the answer". It is there to remind him that asking the right questions of the key staff members will teach them a skill that is ultimately worth the most in his company -- how to think and act independently. Bill Gates, Chief Executive Officer of Microsoft, a software development company and a leader in the field of managing creative people, points out the importance of setting an example in leading for creativity and says, "Creative people like to work with each other. You have to make sure you are encouraging an atmosphere where creative people feel comfortable so you get positive momentum. We keep this

place really fun, otherwise they would go off and do other things." How much fun is our educational workplace?

Bill Gates does something else that sounds remarkably like an hamblecheya. He has innovation retreats, where people are relieved of their day to day activities so that they can focus on one problem and yet in this environment which supports creativity, there is still structure. His innovation retreats are a mixture of formal and informal meetings.

Microsoft uses their electronic mail system as a key component in nurturing creative thought. One real benefit of electronic mail is that it permits their CEO to interact with people he doesn't have time to see or would not talk to normally under a more traditional organizational pattern. It also permits instantaneous communication with every employee. **Technology is going to play a very key role in creating an emerging vision in management styles.**

In large urban school systems with building and facilities spread out over traffic clogged city streets and in rural systems, such as those in Montana where children commute an hour and a half to school and where the central office in a district may be hundreds of miles away, technology will facilitate the "new leadership".

In his book, The Soul of a New Machine, Tracy Kidder, a young engineer was asked what he wanted for developing a new computer in record time and he replied, "It's like a pinball machine, if you succeed you get to do it again". I think a merger of these two systems will recognize that self actualizing people are self starters. "They need time and space to fashion and follow their dreams." But they also need, and this is key to the "new leadership", a **structure which takes care of the day to day necessities**--the mundane, the ordinary, the building maintenance, the transportation, the requisitioning of materials and supplies. A merged model has an acceptance for the existence of an organization to provide these things staffed by people who not only are very competent at doing this, but enjoy it.

In Executive Educator not too long ago, there was a point, counterpoint series of articles on teacher empowerment. One of those articles by Mary Lee Rist pointed out that the systems that have begun to implement a shared vision model have found that some teachers don't necessarily want to be empowered; don't want the additional responsibilities involved in having a say in the management of their institutions. A merged leadership would accept and allow for those individuals to make the good productive contributions they can, without imposing requirements they have no desire to assume.

British schools have operated historically under a shared leadership model with a "headteacher" rather than a principal or administrator, but their recent reform legislation came to the conclusion that although this completely collegial system had many benefits, it was ultimately resistant to accountability and made change

difficult. They are now experiencing a rather enforced amalgam of the two systems with their current reform legislation. It will be interesting to see the leadership organization and visions which emerge from this mandatory revolution.

Restructuring is a buzz word right now. We seem to have been through, in recent years, wave after wave of our own American educational reform movements, which imply very specifically that we as educators are not doing our jobs. Almost every year there is a new national report of significance pulling together statistics to demonstrate conclusively how we are not. Well, I don't think we are doing such a bad job. We are one of the very few nations of the world who make an attempt to educate all of our young people. We don't have any control over the raw material that we use to produce our product. Children come to us from a variety of environments, with a variety or a lack of experiences predisposing them to success in academics. A majority come out of our system with some degree of skill in basic literacy and numeracy. We need to remind ourselves frequently of that achievement. But we don't need to be satisfied because we can and we must do it better. We are not doing a very good job with that very group of children who will be in the majority in the 21st century -- urban, black, Hispanic, poor children. At the same time we are not doing a really good job with this group of people, our society is conspiring against us by becoming more and more technological and requiring higher and higher literacy levels. So while I don't want to cry doomsday, there is a critical need to re-examine our current practice.

There is a revolution going on in the world right now. We can see this clearly in two areas--world politics and industry. In world politics beginning in China, we have seen a rise of democratic thought and in eastern Europe, and now most recently USSR. The governed are saying, "we are no longer content to be governed under a military model in which we invest our power to think and make decisions in a few people --we wish to have more of that power".

Industry is also moving away from the vertical and into the circular. There are two reasons for this. First every one has something to contribute and second we no longer believe that one man can do it. The era of the Rockerfellers and Carnegie has passed. We realize now that the minor detail, the tiny change invented by the worker on the assembly line, could make the difference in a profit margin. Employees must be committed to the cause and to the extent that they no longer see ideologies as causes; they need an element of ownership to give them a practical reason for participation.

Educators, too, are beginning to question. If you ask why teachers sacrifice, they don't always know and they are leaving the field in record numbers. The thread for most teachers is "me and my kids". Some are there because they can't figure out what else to do, some for highly

individualistic reasons, but they are not remaining because of blind adherence to the goals and objectives of the superintendent. I would argue that no matter how strong our policies, I question whether or not we have forward motion when the people ultimately responsible for carrying them out have few shared reasons for doing so.

We need two new thrusts. This new type of leadership requires two things -- sharing of information and ownership. We need input from every source possible and a shared sense of ownership to bond to each other. The day of the great leader coming down off the mountain with tablets saying, "God told me to tell you", is over. One wonderful example of the circular type of leadership comes out of the movie **The Gods Must Be Crazy**. You may remember that in that movie a Coca-Cola bottle falls out of an airplane into a pigmy village and the pigmies find all kinds of inventive uses for it but ultimately it creates great trouble in the tribe because people become jealous of each other's possession of the bottle. They sit around and talk about how to solve this problem. They talk for a very long time and the decision that comes out of the group is what, I think, in fancier terms today we would call a consensus--the bottle must be gotten rid of. One individual volunteers or is assigned the responsibility to take this bottle to the end of the earth and drop it off, which he does and has lots of adventures along the way.

What the solution in that instance was is not what is significant about the story, the significance is the process.

Perhaps we need the backbone of the army's divisional and platoon structure along with the flexibility to implement a circular model. While we are talking about choices for parents in schools, **we need choices for teachers** so that those individuals who don't want to assume the responsibility of shared decision making can function in an environment in which they can be productive, while those who do can have the freedom to explore these possibilities. Even in schools that are run totally by teachers on a shared leadership basis perhaps these individuals would prefer to hire a non-teaching manager to take care of some of the nuts and bolts detail which can be handled relatively effectively by a military organizational structure.

I believe in collegiality. I believe like the kinship, the Taoushpa, and that each individual has a significant contribution to make in a school system. I think it is absolutely critical that we affirm and value every contribution and by inference every individual equally. I think that these things are critical because they're essential to schools and school systems doing the best possible job for children, but I also believe that there are lots of different ways to skin a cat.

Shared leadership is a great concept! It can result in a multiplicity of vision and while it creates some management challenges it can also inspire and engender great

creativity in the solution of problems. Armies however, figured out a long time ago how to achieve significant objectives quickly and how to provide the needed materials and supplies to accomplish an important task in a record period of time.

The military model or the model of the kinship, the linear view of the universe -- the circular view -- is one better? Is one the "right road"? I don't think so. I think we **need** and we **must have** both and it will be up to the truly visionary leaders of the future to find a way to merge these very disparate views to point in the background and detail to the broad brush strokes I have laid down this morning.